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Viewing cable 08BOGOTA4036, COLOMBIA'S RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL (C-NE8-00834)

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#08BOGOTA4036**.

| Reference ID | Created | Released | Classification | Origin |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 08BOGOTA4036 | 2008-11-07 20:13 | 2011-08-30 01:44 | SECRET | Embassy Bogota |

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2011/05/09/113919/wikileaks-us-saw-israeli-firms.html>

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBO #4036/01 3122013
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
P 072013Z NOV 08
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5421
INFO RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 8480
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 1294
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 6714
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY 2621
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 7412
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY 0542
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/FBI WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY

S E C R E T BOGOTA 004036

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/07/2018

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SUBJECT: COLOMBIA'S RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL (C-NE8-00834)

REF: STATE 64659

Classified By: Political Counselor John Creamer
Reasons 1.4 (b and d)

SUMMARY

1. (C) The Government of Colombia (GOC) maintains positive relations with Israel, particularly in the defense sector through private Israeli defense contractors. Key areas of cooperation include strategic military advice, special forces training, and arms sales in support of Colombia's battle against the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia ("FARC"). Economic relations between the two countries outside of defense cooperation remain relatively limited. Colombia's Jewish community remains small, with only approximately 4,000 members. End Summary.

MILITARY COOPERATION

2. (S/NF) Colombia's defense cooperation with Israel cooled during the 1980s and 1990s, when some Israeli mercenaries reportedly helped train paramilitary forces in Colombia. More recently, the GOC has engaged former Israeli military officials to help provide training and advice in the fight against the FARC and other terrorist groups. A contact within the Colombian Ministry of Defense (MOD) told us that this new relationship dates back to December 2006. Over the last two years, Embassy officers visiting the MOD and Colombian military have observed an increased presence of Israeli advisors.

3. (S) Israeli contractors support the GOC through arms sales, military training, and the provision of strategic military planning and consulting services. The GOC has also engaged Israeli contractors to train Colombian special forces, particularly related to high value targets (HVTs). In 2005 and 2006, there was significant frustration among senior Colombian military leadership related to a poor success rate in killing or capturing HVTs. The GOC subsequently contracted retired and active duty Israel Defense Force officers with special operations and military intelligence backgrounds to help in this regard. Israeli contractors have also made recommendations to the GOC on military purchases, joint military operations, and how to restructure Colombia's intelligence services.

THE "STRATEGIC LEAP"

4. (S/NF) Colombia's Ministry of Defense (MOD) has also engaged an Israeli company, Global Comprehensive Security Transformation (Global CST), to help the Colombian government conduct a strategic assessment of the internal conflict. Global CST is a security company run by Major Gen (reserve) Yisrael Ziv, former Director of Operations for the Israel Defense Forces and a personal acquaintance of Colombian Minister of Defense Juan Manuel Santos. The assessment is focused primarily on defeating the FARC and other internal terrorist and criminal organizations, but also includes an evaluation of external threats including Venezuela and Ecuador. The MOD is spearheading the exercise and has named it the "Salto Estrategico" (Strategic Leap).

ARMS SALES

5. (C) In February 2008, the GOC signed a deal with the Israeli government to update 24 Kfir C7s to the C10 version. The GOC is negotiating a possible USD 160 million avionics upgrade contract with the Israel state-owned company Israel Aircraft Industries, Ltd. (IAI). The IAI contract would involve a complete revamping of Colombia's aging Mirage 5 and Kfir fighter aircraft. The GOC is also negotiating the

possible purchase of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) from IAI, with intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities. A consortium including IAI is also bidding on the sale of naval frigates to the GOC. According to an internal MOD document, roughly 38% (606,773 million Colombian pesos) of the GOC's foreign defense purchases went to Israel in 2007. The GOC arms purchases from Israel have not led to direct or indirect GOC support to Israel in other political or economic areas, such as countering Iran, or in supporting Israeli positions at the United Nations.

COLOMBIA'S JEWISH COMMUNITY

¶6. (C) The Jewish community in Colombia is concentrated in Bogota, with smaller communities in Cali, Barranquilla and Medellin. The Confederation of Associations of Bogota represents the Ashkenazi, Sephardic and German Jewish communities in the country, and there are some nine synagogues in Colombia. In the mid-1990s, the Jewish community was estimated to be around 5,500, although many Jews subsequently left due to violence and economic instability. An estimated 4,000 Jews currently reside in Colombia. There are no indications that Colombia's foreign policy interests are shaped by the country's Jewish community.

ECONOMIC RELATIONS

¶7. (C) Israel's economic relations with Colombia remain relatively limited. Colombian exports to Israel fell 17 percent from 2005 to 2007, dropping from USD 197 million to USD 164 million. During the same period, Colombian imports rose 60 percent, increasing from USD 99 million to USD 161 million. Israel ranked as Colombia's 26th largest trading partner in 2007. Over 88 percent of Colombian exports to Israel in 2007 consisted of minerals or hydrocarbons. The majority of Colombian imports from Israel in 2007 were divided among the following sectors: arms and ammunition (28 percent); electrical machinery (25 percent); and non-electrical machinery including boilers (11 percent). While precise country of origin data for foreign direct investment (FDI) is difficult to confirm, Israel has not been a significant source of FDI in Colombia in recent years.

¶8. (S) A previous, comprehensive report prepared by DIA on relations between Israel and Colombia is being sent to INR via e-mail.
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